IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method for organizing e-mail messages comprising the steps of:

providing a direct email-to-email association option in an email program;

indicating at least one first e-mail message in a user mailbox;

associating the at least one first e-mail with a second e-mail by enabling ~~an~~ the association option, wherein said ~~association~~ step of associating further comprises enabling an options list to appear with respect to the at least one first e-mail message, said options list including at least an associate option, a show associations option, and a hide associations option;

selecting the associate option on the options list; and

selecting the second e-mail, wherein the second e-mail is caused to be automatically associated to the at least one first e-mail to form an associated group of e-mails; and

forming an associated group of e-mails in the user mailbox comprising at least two or more associated e-mails;

creating a reply email to at least one of the associated group of e-mails; and

selecting at least one of the show associations option and the hide associations option for the reply e-mail to control whether the reply e-mail is to show ~~information on its~~ the associated group of emails ~~associations~~ to a recipient.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the reply e-mail shows its

associated e-mails to the recipient when the show associations option is selected.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the reply e-mail hides its associated

group of e-mails from the recipient when the hide associations option is selected.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing a collapsability

and expandability feature for the associated group.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of providing a first graphical

indicator for indicating when the associated group is expanded and a second graphical

indicator for indicating when the associated group is collapsed.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing e-mail

operations for performing on the associated group of e-mails.

9. (Currently amended) A method for organizing e-mail messages comprising the steps of:

creating a user-defined discussion topic heading[,];

displaying said discussion topic heading appearing as a separate field in a mailbox

entry an entry in at least one of a user's mailboxes;

associating at least one e-mail message to the user-defined discussion topic heading to

form an associated e-mail-to-topic group;

controlling whether at least one of the user-defined discussion topic heading and

at least one associated email is to be displayed to a recipient of the at least one email message by selecting at least one of a show associations option and a hide associations option on a reply e-mail to be sent to a recipient; and

showing at least one of the discussion topic heading and associated e-mails of the reply e-mail to the recipient if the show associations option is selected.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the step of associating further comprises the steps of:

enabling an options list to appear with respect to the user-defined discussion topic heading;

selecting an associate option on the options list; and

indicating at least one e-mail message; wherein the at least one e-mail is caused to be automatically associated to the user-defined discussion topic heading to form the associated e-mail-to-topic group.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of

providing a show associations and a hide associations option on the options list; and

selecting at least one of the show associations option and the hide associations option on a reply e-mail message to be sent to a recipient.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of showing at least one of the user-defined discussion topic heading and associated e-mails of the reply e-mail message to the recipient if the show associations option is selected.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of hiding at least one of the discussion topic heading and associated e-mails of the reply e-mail message to the recipient if the hide associations option is selected.

14. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of providing a collapsability and expandability feature for the associated e-mail-to-topic group.

15. (Currently amended) An e-mail system comprising:

an associate feature for providing at least one of a direct email-to-email or email-to-topic association option in an email program e-mail organization capabilities to the user by enabling a user to directly link an email message to another email message or to a topic displayed as a field in a mailbox entry, thereby organizing e-mail messages to form at least one of an associated group of e-mails or an associated e-mail-to-topic group in at least one of the user's mailboxes, wherein the associated group of e-mails is formed by the user causing an options list to appear with respect to at least one first e-mail message, selecting an associate feature from said options list, and selecting a second e-mail for causing the second e-mail to be automatically associated to the at least one first e-mail to form the associated group of e-mails, wherein the options list further comprises a show associations feature and a hide associations feature; and

a reply email created for at least one of the associated group of e-mails, said reply e-mail being configured to show or hide information on its associations the associated group of emails to a recipient.

16. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the options list is provided with respect to each e-mail message, said options list including said associate feature.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously presented) The system of claim 16, wherein the associated e-mail-to-topic group is formed by creating a user-defined discussion topic heading, causing the options list to appear with respect to at least one e-mail message, selecting the associate feature from said options list, and indicating the discussion topic heading, wherein the at least one e-mail message is caused to be automatically associated to the discussion topic to form the associated e-mail-to-topic group and said discussion topic heading appears as an additional field in said at least one e-mail message.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising an auto-process feature for automatically parsing a received e-mail to search for an existing discussion thread, wherein if an existing discussion thread is found, the received e-mail is automatically associated to the discussion thread.